BOOM! STUDIOS™

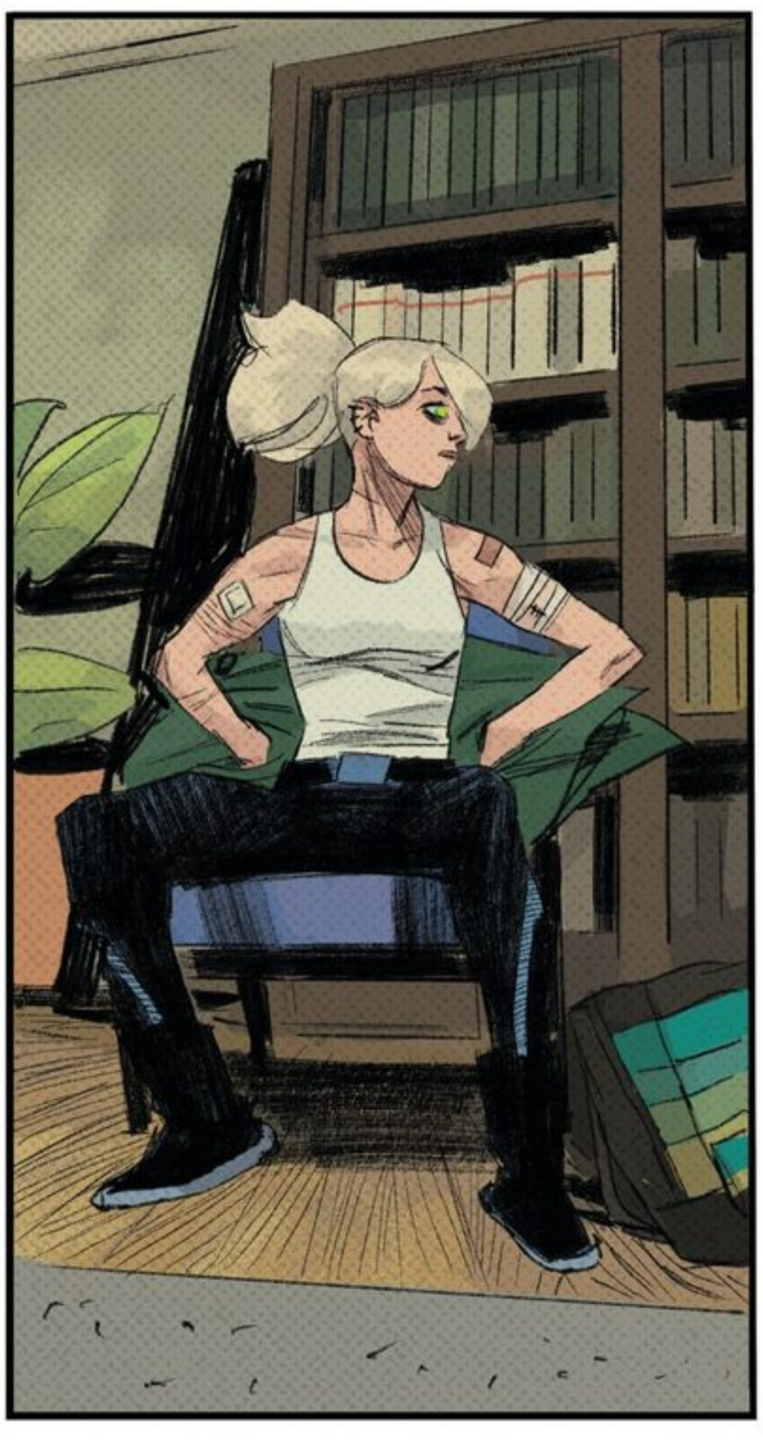
JAMES TYNION IV

WERTHER DELL'EDERA

MIQUEL MUERTO

Nº 39

SOMETHING is KILLING the CHILDREN™



SO, WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

CURIOSITY, I GUESS.

ABOUT YOURSELF.

I GUESS.

WELL. NO. NOT ABOUT ME. ABOUT *THIS.* ABOUT WHAT YOU DO.

YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TO THERAPY.

I THINK IT'S KIND OF DUMB.

SURE. IT *CAN* BE. THERE ARE LOTS OF BAD THERAPISTS OUT THERE.

BUT NOT YOU. YOU'RE ONE OF THE *GOOD ONES.*

YOU'RE PAYING FOR THIS, EITHER WAY. YOU MIGHT AS WELL TALK TO ME FOR A LITTLE BIT.

I'M OUT OF PRACTICE. I DON'T LIKE PEOPLE VERY MUCH.

THAT'S FAIR. A LOT OF BAD ONES OUT THERE.

YEAH.

BUT UNLESS YOU'RE GOING TO MOVE INTO ***THE WOODS,*** MAYBE THIS IS PRACTICE.

BUT YOU'RE NOT ***ASKING*** ME ANYTHING. HOW DOES THIS ***WORK*** IF YOU DON'T ASK ME ANYTHING?

WHAT WOULD ***YOU*** ASK YOU IF YOU WERE SITTING WHERE I AM?

PROBABLY START WITH THE STITCHES ON MY ARM. ASK ME HOW I GOT THOSE. AND THE BRUISES.

HOW'D YOU GET THOSE STITCHES AND THOSE BRUISES?

I CAN'T TELL YOU.

WELL THEN THAT WASN'T A VERY GOOD THING FOR ME TO ASK.

GUESS NOT.

HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOUR MOM DIED?

TWELVE. AND IT WAS BOTH OF THEM. MY MOM AND MY DAD. SAME NIGHT. AND MY FRIEND, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER HER THAT MUCH NOW.

YOU WERE THERE?

YEAH. I WAS THERE. I SAW IT.

BUT YOU SURVIVED. HOW DID YOU SURVIVE?

I SAW THE THING THAT KILLED THEM, AND I TRIED TO KILL IT. GOT PRETTY CLOSE, TOO.

AN ANIMAL.

SURE. A REAL FUCKED-UP ANIMAL.

AND THEN *JESSICA* SAVED MY LIFE. AND SHE...FOUND ME A NEW HOME.

WHO IS JESSICA?

I GUESS... SHE RAISED ME.

NO. SORRY.

DON'T BE SORRY.

I'M NOT A CRIER.

YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE YOU ARE, AND I'M NOT GOING TO TELL ANYONE, I PROMISE.

YEAH.

TELL ME ABOUT JESSICA.

THE KIDS IN TOWN. THE ONES WHO HAVE BEEN DYING. HAVE YOU BEEN TALKING TO, LIKE...THEIR FRIENDS, AND PARENTS?

I DON'T DISCUSS MY OTHER PATIENTS.

BUT THIS ISN'T A BIG TOWN. YOU'VE TALKED TO A FEW OF THEM, I'M SURE.

IT'S DEFINITELY ON A LOT OF PEOPLE'S MINDS. INCLUDING MINE. IT'S ***HORRIBLE.*** AND NOBODY SEEMS TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING.

DO YOU TALK TO KIDS?

IT'S NOT MY SPECIALTY, BUT THE CLOSEST CHILD PSYCHOLOGIST IS ABOUT A ***90-MINUTE DRIVE*** AWAY, SO IT HAPPENS. USUALLY AFTER A DIVORCE.

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO A KID WHO JUST LOST HIS FRIEND? OR THEIR SIBLING?

ERICA...

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

SOMETHING is KILLING the CHILDREN

I KEEP CRYING.

AND THAT'S UNUSUAL.

YEAH.

I DON'T THINK I CRIED WHEN MY PARENTS DIED. MAYBE A LITTLE. BUT THERE WAS SO MUCH HAPPENING.

LIKE, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE ***USE*** WAS. IT WASN'T GOING TO GIVE ME ANYTHING.

THAT MAKES SENSE.

AND I DIDN'T NEED IT.

WHERE I WAS RAISED, THEY DIDN'T REALLY LIKE CRYING. THE OTHER KIDS MIGHT SEE AND FIND OUT YOU'RE ***WEAK,*** AND THEY'D USE THAT.

AND IT'S NOT LIKE I WANTED TO OR ANYTHING. I HAD ***OTHER*** THINGS I WANTED.

DID IT BOTHER YOU WHEN THE OTHER KIDS CRIED?

I MEAN. SURE. I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT, REALLY. LIKE, IT PUT THIS OBVIOUS TARGET ON YOU, AND WHY WOULD YOU WANT THAT TARGET ON YOU?

WE WERE ALL FUCKED UP. AND THE ONES WHO CRIED USUALLY DIDN'T MAKE IT VERY FAR.

AARON USED TO CRY, AND THEY'D ALL PICK ON HIM FOR IT. AND THEN HE'D TRY TO MAKE ***ME*** CRY, BUT I WAS MEANER TO HIM.

WHY?

BECAUSE HE'S A ***LITTLE SHIT.***

BUT I WAS ALWAYS ***MEANER*** TO THE PEOPLE WHO WERE MEAN TO HIM.

HOW ABOUT THE ADULTS IN YOUR LIFE? DID YOU EVER SEE ANY OF *THEM* CRY?

YEAH.

JESSICA CRIED A LOT. SHE NEEDED TO BE *DRINKING* TO CRY, BUT SHE DRANK A LOT, SO SHE CRIED A LOT.

DID YOU THINK SHE WAS WEAK?

YEAH.

YOU DON'T SOUND TOO SURE.

IF SHE WASN'T WEAK SHE'D STILL *BE HERE.*

SHE COULDN'T KEEP HERSELF IN CHECK. SHE DIDN'T HAVE ANY *DISCIPLINE.*

SHE LET *OTHER PEOPLE* PICK UP THE SLACK BEFORE THEY WERE READY, EVEN IF IT PUT THEM IN *DANGER.*

IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE ANGRY WITH HER.

I'M *NOT* ANGRY WITH HER.

THIS ISN'T WHY I'M TALKING TO YOU.

I CRY, NOW.

I'D LIKE TO STOP CRYING.

I'M SORRY. IT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN JUST TURN OFF.

IT *IS.*

I DID IT WHEN I WAS ***TWELVE FUCKING YEARS OLD*** AND I SHOULD BE ABLE TO FUCKING DO IT AGAIN.

I'M NOT GOING TO TEACH YOU HOW TO ***REPRESS*** YOUR EMOTIONS. THAT DOESN'T WORK OUT WELL FOR MOST PEOPLE.

IT WORKS FOR A WHILE, AND THEN IT BECOMES HARD TO KEEP THEM IN.

IT CAN BECOME HARD TO ***LET THEM OUT,*** TOO.

PEOPLE WHO SPEND THEIR LIVES HOLDING EVERYTHING IN, THEY CAN BECOME ***DEPENDENT*** ON ANYTHING THAT LETS THEM LET THAT EMOTION OUT.

BUT THAT'S ***MESSY.*** IT CAN HURT PEOPLE.

BUT IT WORKS FOR A WHILE.

HELP ME MAKE IT WORK FOR A WHILE.

HOW LONG AGO DID YOU LOSE HER? JESSICA?

ONE YEAR AGO.

ONE YEAR THIS WEEKEND.

HOW DID SHE...?

NO. I'M NOT GOING TO TELL YOU THAT.

I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry...

THAT'S NOT FOR YOU.

OKAY.

YOU ASKED ME WHAT I TELL THE KIDS WHO COME IN. THE ONES WHO HAVE LOST SOMEBODY.

EVERYBODY GETS KIDS BACKWARDS.

THEY THINK THAT KIDS ARE ALL ***BALLS OF EMOTION,*** AND SURE, KIDS HAVE LOTS OF EMOTIONS...

"BUT FOR THE MOST PART THEY'RE STILL FIGURING OUT HOW THE WORLD WORKS. THEY LIKE ***LOGIC.*** THEY WANT TO KNOW ***WHY*** THINGS ARE HAPPENING.

"SO, I LIKE TO ASK THE QUESTION: WHAT IS THE ***PRACTICAL*** USE OF BEING SAD?

"LIKE, THE ***UTILITY*** OF IT, TO US AS HUMANS. WHY WE EVOLVED TO BE SAD WHEN WE LOSE SOMEONE IN OUR LIFE.

"SOMEONE IMPORTANT. SOMEONE WHO SHAPED US INTO WHO WE ARE."

IT'S TO MAKE SURE WE ***REMEMBER.***

SADNESS IS A TOOL OUR BRAIN USES TO TAKE ALL OF THE MEMORIES THAT WE *LOVE* THE MOST OR *HATE* THE MOST AND MAKE SURE THEY'RE NEVER *FORGOTTEN.*

NOT OUT OF SENTIMENTALITY, OR NOSTALGIA...

IT'S SO WE REMEMBER WHAT WAS *IMPORTANT,* SO THAT WE CAN SEE IT IN THE WORLD WHEN IT COMES AROUND AGAIN.

AND SO WE REMEMBER WHAT *HURT,* SO WE DON'T GET HURT AGAIN.

OR HURT *ANYBODY ELSE* LIKE WE WERE HURT.

I LIKE THAT.

YEAH, IT'S PRETTY GOOD.

HMM.

OKAY. I'M DONE. THAT'S ENOUGH.

WE CAN TALK AGAIN IF YOU WANT. THIS TIME WORKS FOR ME IF YOU WANT TO COME BACK NEXT TUESDAY.

I'LL BE FAR AWAY FROM HERE NEXT TUESDAY. AND YOU SHOULD HOPE I DON'T EVER HAVE TO COME BACK TO THIS TOWN.

THERE'S A GIRL A MILE AWAY FROM HERE ON HOPE STREET, JUST OFF MAIN. SHE'S FOURTEEN YEARS OLD. SHE LOST HER LITTLE BROTHER.

I THINK IT'D BE NICE IF YOU TOLD HER WHAT YOU TOLD ME.

THIS SHOULD COVER A FEW SESSIONS.

AND TELL HER...I'M SORRY.

HERE. I WANT YOU TO TAKE MY CARD. YOU CAN CALL ME IF YOU NEED TO. TEXT. WHATEVER WORKS.

I WON'T.

TAKE IT. *PLEASE.*

GOODBYE.

SOMETHING is KILLING the CHILDREN™

"ROAD STORIES"
PART FOUR

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